

Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council

**18 February, 2003
Marathon Garden Club**

FINAL MINUTES

Members Present

Todd Firm

Richard Grathwohl

Debra Harrison

David Hawtof

Martin Moe

Ken Nedimyer

George Neugent

Anita Schwessinger

Alternates Present

Greg DiDomenico for Tony Iarocci

Peter Gladding for Bruce Popham

Jerry Lorenz for Deborah Shaw

Jody Thomas for Nancy Klingener

Sheila Mullins

Call to Order

Chair Neugent called the meeting to order at 9:20 a.m.

Approval of Minutes/Adoption of Agenda

Upon motion by Ms. Harrison the minutes of the December 10, 2002 meeting were seconded and approved as presented. Upon motion by Ms. Harrison the agenda for this meeting was seconded and approved as presented.

Acknowledgments

Billy Causey noted the role played by Richard Grathwohl in helping to arrange for presentations by Sean Mehan, Kevin Kirsch and Ben Richards at a recent seminar hosted by Captain Dave Navarro of The World Class Angler in Marathon. He recognized Captain Navarro's contribution to the community through this outreach effort.

Announcements

Debra Harrison reported that in the recent Omnibus Bill passed by Congress, additional authorization was given to the Army Corps to proceed with the compromised proposal, Alternative 6D, to resolve the 8.5 Square Mile issue.

Chair Neugent reported on a recent visit he made to Capitol Hill with Jim Roberts, Monroe County Manager and Jody Thomas of The Nature Conservancy as well as staff from The Ocean Conservancy to pursue the \$100 million approved by Congress for waste water improvements in the Florida Keys.

Mr. Causey thanked Ms. Thomas for her additional work on behalf of the National Ocean Service in restoring funds to the budget for monitoring projects in the Sanctuary.

Introductions

Chair Neugent welcomed Peter Gladding to the meeting. Mr. Gladding remarked that his experience on the Tortugas 2000 Working Group has turned him into an advocate both for marine reserves and for the process involved in establishing the Tortugas Ecological Reserve. He said that marine reserves are the most beneficial fisheries management tool for the fish.

Public Comment

H.T. Pontin Mr. Pontin discussed a document concerning waste water treatment in the Florida Keys produced by the Army Corps of Engineers, particularly dilution effects of releasing waste water into the open sea.

Report on the Large Ship Working Group – Don Kincaid (SAC) and Fritz Wettstein (FKNMS)

Mr. Wettstein reported that the second meeting of this working group was held in January in Key West, with an attendance of around 30 people. Topics, including prepared presentations, covered turbidity, discharges, harbor congestion and the economics of Navy ships and cruise ships operating in Key West Harbor. Mr. Kincaid noted that it was beneficial to the group to hear from a number of perspectives. He gave a visual presentation of some of the cultural materials dating back several centuries deposited in Key West Harbor, as well as some shots of vessels entering and exiting the harbor showing sediment plumes as well as exhaust fumes. Discussion followed concerning the role of the working group, the sediment stirred up by large vessels using the Harbor, the impact of sediment on marine resources, the socioeconomic impact of the cruise industry as well as the environmental impact and the amount of fresh water used by large ships docking in Key West.

LT Robert Kamphaus announced that there will soon be a link to the main FKNMS website both through New Additions and the Sanctuary Advisory Council link, on the Large Ship Working Group, which will provide documents, references, PowerPoint presentations and meeting reviews.

Sanctuary Superintendent's Report – Billy Causey (FKNMS)

Mr. Causey gave the attached presentation. He noted that March is Seagrass Awareness Month in the State of Florida. Mr. Causey said that the National Marine Sanctuary Program is in the process of regional reorganization and that is currently under review in the Senate. He introduced Alex Score as the South Florida Ecosystem Education Coordinator in a two-year position administered and supported by Florida Sea Grant, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service and the National Sea Grant program.

Florida Department of Environmental Protection Report – Fritz Wettstein (FDEP)

Mr. Wettstein gave a positive status report on the impact of the Governor's Budget on FDEP. He said that Kacky Andrews will be attending the US Coral Reef Task Force meeting, with a collaborative proposal from the Caribbean region for addressing land

based sources of pollutants. Anne McCarthy, the Lower Region Damage Assessment and Restoration Specialist was recognized as DEP Employee of the Month. He reported that the Florida Coastal Management Program is now housed within the Department of Environmental Protection. Mr. Wettstein said that the State has provided support to the Navy and Army Corps of Engineers for the dredging project in Key West Harbor in the form of the Mosquito Control Board helicopter for overflights. He announced a future research coordinators meeting on the effects of larvicides on shrimp and insects, specifically the rare Miami Blue butterfly. Discussion followed concerning the impact of herbicides and pesticides on near shore water quality.

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Report – John Hunt (FMRI)

Mr. Hunt gave a reminder about registration for the Florida Bay/GEER meeting. He said that the FWC is holding workshops on February 18 in Marathon and February 19 in Key West concerning, amongst other items, a license for the two day sport diving lobster season. He reported that the FMRI lobster research team represented by Dr. Rod Bertelsen will present a paper at the Fall meeting of the American Fisheries Society in Quebec on lobster egg production per hectare under different management regimes. Mr. Hunt said that preliminary data suggest that there is a substantial increase in the amount of egg production in the Tortugas Ecological Reserve compared to in the fishery. Discussion followed concerning the role of gender and size of animal in egg production. He reported on findings from a recent meeting he attended that indicate long distance movement of grouper from South Carolina through the Keys to the Gulf of Mexico, suggesting a remarkable degree of connectivity throughout the region.

Sanctuary Enforcement Report – Capt. Jayson Horadam

Capt. Horadam introduced Officer David McDaniels from the Upper Keys Region. He gave a PowerPoint presentation, comprised of photographs taken by officers on the water and in the course of conducting normal business. They covered a diversity of topics including seagrass injury reports, permit violations, fishery violations, illegal immigrants, the rescue of a mola mola in Key West Harbor, fish trap removal from TER and routine education of the public on the water. In addition to patrolling on the water, FWC officers collaborate with the Coast Guard on over-flights of Sanctuary waters. Mr. Gladding commended the crew of the Point Monroe for enforcement work in the TER.

Pulley Ridge – the USs Deepest Coral Reef? – Dr. Robert Halley (USGS)

Dr Halley gave a PowerPoint presentation on Pulley Ridge, an area north west of the Tortugas that may be the deepest hermatypic coral reef off the continental US. He described the community composition of the 230 ft reef, with greater than 50% coral cover, and attributed its health to distance from major population centers and its situation in the Loop Current. Discussion followed concerning the extent of commercial fishing in the area.

First Annual Report on Diadema Restoration Project – Martin Moe (SAC) and Ken Nedimyer (SAC)

Mr. Moe described the 18 month project he jointly conducted with Mr. Nedimyer funded by FKNMS and gave a PowerPoint presentation. He discussed the 1983 Caribbean wide die-off of *Diadema antillarum*, the long-spined sea urchin, and its ecological significance. He reported on the experimental restoration of juvenile urchins to patch reefs in the Upper Keys from the rubble zone and monitoring throughout the experiment. He discussed the results which showed significant increases in coral cover where *Diadema* have been maintained above their recent low level. Discussion followed concerning implementing this experimental work on a wider scale, settlement patterns in the Keys, and the need to present a poster at the coming Florida Bay/GEER conference.

Report on the Final Review of the Florida Keys Carrying Capacity Study – Jody Thomas (The Nature Conservancy)

Ms. Thomas gave a brief history of the Carrying Capacity Study undertaken by the Army Corps of Engineers and Florida Department of Community Affairs, and the review process that was undertaken by a panel appointed by the National Academy of Sciences, including a final review that was underwritten by NOAA, EPA, SFWMD, Sanctuary Friends of the Florida Keys and The Nature Conservancy. She discussed the modules that make up the model and evaluated their utility to growth management planners in Monroe County. Discussion followed concerning the replacement of the Marine Module with the Florida Bay Feasibility Study, and the possibility of a joint meeting with the Water Quality Protection Program Steering Committee later in the year.

Update from Monroe County on Joint Buoy Marking Projects and Derelict Vessels – George Garrett (Marine Resources Division)

Mr. Garrett gave an update of grants being administered by the County for channel marking and substandard regulatory zones, as well as mooring fields developed in conjunction with the implementation of the No Discharge Zone in state waters of the Sanctuary. He described interagency collaboration in developing a wildlife management area in the Sandbar off the Village of Islamorada. He noted that the revenue from the increased boater registration fee will offset the proposed elimination of the State of Florida Derelict Vessel Fund. Monroe County is currently the prime user of the fund.

Update on Residential Shoreline Marking Program – Brenda Altmeier (FKNMS)

John Halas, Upper Keys Resource Manager, introduced Brenda Altmeier who gave a PowerPoint presentation. She described the expedited process by which homeowners and homeowners associations can obtain permits through the Sanctuary for marker buoys to delineate the 100 yards off residential shorelines, designated in the Sanctuary Management Plan as an idle speed only zone. This is the result of recommendations made by the Personal Watercraft Working Group. She said that 54 buoys in 10 locations have been approved so far.

Report on the MSC Diego Grounding – Harold Hudson (FKNMS)

Mr. Hudson showed a video of the extensive anchor chain injury sustained by large, slow growing corals in the Tortugas Ecological Reserve close to Sherwood Forest in the Fall

of 2002. He described restoration efforts being undertaken by the responsible party and Sanctuary Damage Assessment and Restoration Project team members. Discussion followed concerning liability, shipping practices and the time frame for the Particularly Sensitive Sea Area to be incorporated in both NOAA and British Admiralty maps.

Homeland Security Funds

Ms. Thomas moved that the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council urge the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to maximize efficiency of both the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary mission and the Homeland Security mission by seeking funds appropriated to implement homeland security measures to improve enforcement and patrol capacity within the Sanctuary. The motion was seconded by Mr. Kincaid and passed unanimously upon voice vote.

Public Comment

Sheri Sullenger Ms. Sullenger on behalf of the Florida Keys Wild Dolphin Alliance requested that the issue of an educational certification program for commercial marine mammal viewing operations be put on the SAC agenda for April 8. She said that in the past 5 years the number of operations in Key West has gone from 6 to around 30, 15 of them full time. She observed that there is high employee turnover within these operations. Chair Neugent agreed to put the issue on the agenda.

H.T. Pontin Mr. Pontin discussed a handout that he circulated concerning the role of the individual in protecting endangered species as opposed to non-governmental organizations and government agencies. He requested that the constitutional rights of private individuals be taken into consideration by regulatory agencies.

Resource Violations Law

Mr. Grathwohl mentioned a recent meeting between Florida Guides Association officers and Florida Fish & Wildlife Commission Department of Law Enforcement officers in which the issue of raising penalties for poaching was discussed.

Mr. Grathwohl on behalf of the Florida Guides Association requested that the Sanctuary Advisory Council send a letter in support of the Association's proposal to the Florida Legislature to revise existing laws to require charges to be filed that reflect the severity of the alleged crime. The motion was seconded by Ms. Harrison and passed unanimously upon voice vote.

Update on the South Florida Ecosystem Task Force – Billy Causey

Mr. Causey introduced Rafaela Monchek who is on the staff for the Task Force. He said that the Task Force is moving forward with the land acquisition strategy and that the programmatic regulations are about to be reviewed. He mentioned a workshop on Avian Ecology, March 17-19 in Key Largo. Dr. Lorenz clarified that the workshop is for biologists studying four protected species to determine whether water management is an issue of conflict for the recovery of those species. He indicated that the restoration to the system of proper timing and flow patterns will cause all four species to rebound with the appropriate measures.

Update on the US Coral Reef Task Force – Billy Causey

Mr. Causey mentioned the forthcoming meeting of the Task Force in Washington, D.C. at which Kacky Andrews, representing the State of Florida and the Sanctuary as co-trustee, will make a Resolution on behalf of the southeast United States and Caribbean region concerning the need to look at point sources and non-point sources of pollution in near shore waters.

Water Quality Protection Program Steering Committee: integrating activities with the SAC – Open Discussion

Mr. Causey said that in 1992 the SAC met jointly with the WQPP Steering Committee and the South Florida Ecosystem Task Force in Key Largo, and reminded the Advisory Council that water quality issues are top on the list of SAC priorities. Discussion concerned the importance of linking Everglades ecosystem restoration to water quality in the Florida Keys, the lack of unity among residents on water quality issues and the need for more frequent meetings on water quality issues. Support was voiced for a joint meeting.

Adjourned

Submitted by

Fiona Wilmot